5          METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR LOAD BALANCING
                 IN NETWORK PROCESSING DEVICE

                    ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE
                 A data rate controller controls a rate that data is transferred over a backplane

10     in a network processing device. A bandwidth allocator allocates bandwidth to an

       input port for transmitting data over the backplane to an output port. A bandwidth

       limiter identifies a maximum allowable bandwidth the input port is allocated on the

       backplane. A bandwidth tracker identifies an amount of bandwidth currently

       allocated to the input port for transmitting data over the backplane to the output port.

15     When the current allocated bandwidth is used up, the data rate controller prevents that

       input port from connecting to output ports through the backplane until more

       bandwidth is allocated.